



East Lyme Public Schools

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SUPERINTENDENT
James D. Lombardo, Ed. D.

TESTIMONY ON SB 1097

James D. Lombardo, Ed.D
East Lyme Public Schools Superintendent

I am concerned about two provisions of SB 1097. The first provision, in essence, makes the evaluation system for teachers and principals a mandatory topic of bargaining with the bargaining agents for both groups. The second provision substitutes an ineffective implementation plan for the one that was developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC).

Under present statute, the local board of education has final authority over the teacher and principal evaluation system as long as representatives of the bargaining unit involved are consulted prior to a decision being made. Section 1 (b) of the proposed bill, however, removes from the Board of Education this final authority regarding the system that will be used to evaluate teachers in every school system in the state. The authority would rest with the professional development and evaluation committee of the school district. If the Board of Education and this committee cannot reach agreement on a plan, then the district would be obligated to implement the state model plan.

While collaborative decision making is a noble enterprise, members of professional development and evaluation committee members have no responsibility for the results achieved by a school system. Only boards of education and the superintendents whom they hire have this responsibility. The bill, in effect, would give authority over a school system function that is directly related to the results achieved by a school system to a body that has no responsibility for those results.

The bill also constitutes a significant departure from over thirty years of history by making moot the 1986 Wethersfield case that holds that teacher evaluation systems are not a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

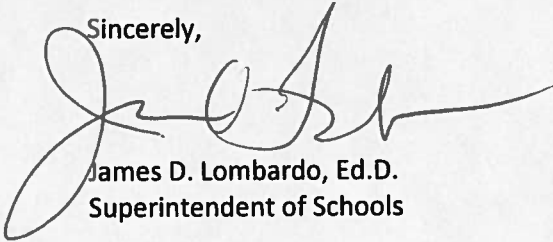
Section 1(a) of the bill would require every district to implement the new evaluation system with every certified professional in the district in 2014-15. There would be no phase in and no resultant opportunity to learn from that experience before we go to full implementation. To avoid this kind of situation, the PEAC reached consensus on a process whereby 2013-14 would be a bridge year during which districts could choose among acceptable phase in options. This consensus, while it does not necessarily represent all of the phase in options that I would like to have seen offered, at least recognizes the fact that going to full implementation in every district in the state in any one year is a recipe for failure.

Frankly, I have many more significant issues with the provisions of the overall state legislation regarding teacher and principal evaluation than the timeline for its implementation. To date, we have seen little evidence that a system that relies on student data to influence teacher and principal evaluation will actually result in improvement in student performance. In fact, we find much research to support the conclusion that such a system could actually harm student and teacher motivation and achievement. Nonetheless, given the reality of recently adopted legislation, I see supporting the PEAC recommendations as the best solution to a deeply flawed piece of legislation. At least a bridge year will

give us time to examine the flaws of the existing legislative mandate and to recommend future improvements.

I urge you, therefore, not to support SB 1097 as it is presently written and instead, to refer to the PEAC the issues which the bill attempts to address. That body is best equipped to make recommendations regarding implementation schedules, phase in options and decision making processes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Lombardo', with a large, stylized initial 'J' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

James D. Lombardo, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Dr. Joseph Cirsuolo, Executive Director, CAPSS